TATTOO BLADE

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Tattoo Blade
Tattoos and minutes, two destinies

This is a struggle between predator and prey, eat or be eaten!
The woman's fierce smile made the Great Fang ready to go.

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Prologue

The impact struck from the seabed.
Waves of rattles rock the Atlantic, and slaughtered shoals of fish stain the deep sea with fresh blood.
The steel hulls diving in the midst of it were also on the verge of capsizing in terror.

“ A shockwave! “
The adjutant shouts at the launch station as the red emergency lights twinkle.
The German Navy's second class U-boat 5888 is an up-and-coming submarine that has just been completed.
Its mighty hull is about to be crushed with a baby-like screech.
The radio operator, who was holding a receiver to his ear, turned around with a very pale face.
"I don't understand! The depth is too deep for a bomb attack!"
While the hull creaks and squeaks, the issuing office receives screaming reports from various parts of the submarine.
"It's the engine room! Propulsion power has dropped to 60%! Manual restoration in progress!
Flooding in residential areas! Wards 2 and 4 are closed for drainage!"

The captain and his crew are all fierce warriors who have been accustomed to fighting underwater for many years.
Even though the hull of the ship is about to be crushed, they’re strong enough to calmly carry out the mission and survive.
Still, there was an uneasiness swirling in their chests that they did not usually feel.
“Where is the enemy ship? Did the sonar not pick them up?"
At the captain’s question, the radio operator removed his headphones slightly and shook his head.
"No, I don't see any ships on the surface of the sea. Perhaps an anti-submarine patrol..."
"This doesn’t make any sense. The Azores, where the enemy air base is located, are still far away. These are our waters.“
It's not like a detonation or a mine contact. On the contrary, there is not even a hint of the enemy.
As if to mock their fear, a stronger shockwave struck U588.
The radio operator, hearing the roar properly, screams and falls off his chair.
“Oh my God!!!”
As blood spurted from the operator’s eardrums, the captain held him up as he struggled.
“Can you hear what I’m saying?!” the adjutant asked.
“I’ll take him to the infirmary myself!” A young sailor tried to carry out the fallen radio operator, but was grabbed by the collar and forcefully pulled down.

A slender man in a black uniform stood before the stunned sailor and the adjutant.
"Do not leave your post without permission! Same goes for the operator!"
The young officer with the high-pitched voice looked down at the adjutant in a coquettish manner.
“The first thing you need to do is to find out what the impact was. Identify whether it was an enemy attack!"
“You’re insane!”
For some reason, the adjutant showed condescending anger toward the supposedly younger officer.
“He’s done his duty. You can't force him to do more!"
“If he’s done with his duty then there is no air for him to breathe on this submarine. And, subsequently, no medical treatment."
There was a sense of disquiet in the U588's launching station.
The black uniforms worn by the young officers are from a different organization than those of the crew.
Armed SS. And a fool who has been thoroughly indoctrinated with Nazi doctrine.
The SS officer cornered the adjutant, not caring about the cold stares of the crew.
“Make it easy on them!” he said and laughed. “Make it easy on one, and he'll have more than his share of what little food we have left.”
'These are the people I have fought side by side with all my life, and I would never let anyone who is more than family to me just die like that!”
'This ship is under the jurisdiction of our armed SS... No, it is under the jurisdiction of His Excellency. As I am His Excellency's adjutant, my orders are absolute."
“...The war is long over!"
The adjutant glanced at the date on his calendar. June 6, 1945.
It has been exactly one year since the Allied landings at Normandy.
Their home country, Germany, had already been defeated and scorched to the ground a month earlier.
Even the Führer was killed when he was pinched by Soviet forces from the east and U.S. and British allied forces from the west.
On board the U588, still on duty, however, the SS officer put his hand on his pistol.
“Orders are absolute until the mission is over… Argh!” In mid-sentence, the SS officer let out an anguished cry, his wrist twisted by someone's strong arm as he tries to pull out the pistol.
The SS officer turned around to see the fearless face of the captain, Navy Commander Karl Rossbach.
“Indeed, we are fighting at His Excellency's behest. But neither His Excellency nor you, boy, are sailors – and if you forgot, this is a deep-sea battlefield. Shut up and listen to what the submariner has to say."
“Let go of me! I'll report you for your insolence!”
“Go ahead and do as you please. His Excellency should be awake by now."
Captain Rossbach carelessly released his hand, throwing the SS officer to the side. Then he turned on his heel and looked back at his veteran crew of a hundred battles.

“Sailor, take the operator to the infirmary. Adjutant, take over the radio. Everybody - combat alert, increase speed!"

Suddenly, the crew is reinvigorated and the command post comes to life.
Rossbach sat down in the captain's chair and pulled his military cap down over his eyes - this submarine was an extension of him and the crew were his children.
Karl thought to himself – “I will not let a stranger, even if he is a member of the SS, have free reign.”
As the SS officer left to escape the captain’s gaze, the adjutant grabbed the receiver.
“Captain, is this an attack of the Allies?”
“No… Looks more like an undersea volcanic eruption than an attack”
I've never heard such a sound, though... – Rossbach added in his mind - The Azores, which we are about to pass through, is the only volcanic island group in the Atlantic…
“Azimuth and depth, out. We're close."
When he finally got the adjutant's report, Rossbach raised his eyebrows.
“We’re not anywhere near close. How the… This is ridiculous! Is it rising?"
The source of the shock wave detected by sonar was changing its position every second - from the depths of the deep sea and to it’s very surface…
Rossbach listened to the receiver himself. Still a lot of underwater static noise - but through it all, something stirs, something akin to an ominous roar.
“Adjutant, we're going up to periscope depth.”
“We’re going to surface already?”
The puzzled adjutant looked over at his pocket watch and winced.
“It’s dawn already... Even if the shockwave is not an attack by the Allies, there’s a good chance that a ship or aircraft of some other nation will notice it visually.”
“There’s no flooding on the submarine, but the shockwave may have caused cracks in the hull. I'd like to check."
“But we are on a classified mission!” The adjutant warned the determined captain in a somewhat hushed voice.
“Mustn't any of them discover us until we deliver Him to the destination?”
Indeed - His Excellency... Rossbach stroked his stubble bitterly.
Convoying only one person. That was U588's last mission.
The war of U588 is still going on to get that man out of defeated Germany - and His Excellency has yet to tell U588 his destination.
“Adjutant, have you been told our destination? For a week already, we have been forced to make these endless circumnavigations through the waters by order of His Excellency, but we are in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. There is no land nearby.” Rossbach has no hesitation in obeying an order issued by a sane person - but who can say for sure that His Excellency is sane?
After all, his Excellency commanded only one word. Go to the Promised Land.

"It’s dangerous to continue sailing without inspecting the damage to the hull. Periscope depth, adjutant."

Rossbach repositioned his military cap and patted the adjutant's shoulder with a complicated look on his face.

"Don't look so worried. If this ship sinks, your Excellency will not make it to its destination.”

At the moment he said this, the sound of hard shoes echoed directly behind Rossbach.

"Of course, captain. I agree with you.”

Rossbach turned around. A man in a military uniform held out his hands in a theatrical pose in front of him.

"Good morning, gentlemen. Compared to the shockwave we just got hit by, a Soviet multiple rocket launcher seems like a child's play. Please check the situation at once.”

A man in his forties, wearing the uniform of an ordinary Wehrmacht infantry colonel. But of course, that dress doesn't reflect his true status. The uniform was probably snatched from a corpse to hide his true identity when escaping the burning Berlin - he had every reason to do so and every talent to make a successful escape.

Every time Captain Rossbach thinks of the talent of this distinguished guest, he feels an unspeakable chill run down his spine. How is it that he's the only one who managed to escape this far?

Intercepted Allied radio broadcasts report the capture of Reichsführer Goering and Oberstgruppenführer Himmler. Propaganda Minister Goebbels is heard to have poisoned his own children and then burned himself to death. Everyone in Germany would have been on their deathbeds, including the Führer. And His Excellency, too, have witnessed the Führer's death. So how is it that he's the only one who has survived?

The guest of honor smiled back at Rossbach while the latter thought of this.

"I have a gift for you, captain.” The guest of honor gave a cold smile to Rossbach, who hid his nervousness.

"The talent to perceive danger, to avoid danger, to make danger your ally. That is why I made it out of Berlin alive. That is HOW I got out of Berlin alive. It's time for me to emerge now."

"But I instructed lieutenant Greiner, the adjutant, to find out what the shockwave was..."

"My orders take absolute precedence over his. You'll understand it once we surface."

“So you say there is no danger?” When Rossbach asked, the guest of honor shook his head leisurely and readjusted his pose.

"No, it's dangerous. There is tremendous danger. I know it.”

“Then we'll surface at...”

"I told you, captain. You must have danger on your side if you wish to survive.”

The voice of the guest of honor gradually grew irritable, and there was a spark of evil in his shining eyes.

"I cannot win with the powerless on my side. What I need is someone dangerous but powerful. That is why I survived so long in the Führer bunker."

The adjutant announced that sufficient reconnaissance depth had been reached. Rossbach turns to the periscope to probe the sea surface situation. But the Atlantic Ocean, which should have been illuminated by the light of dawn, was simply covered in pure white.

"Dense fog. Too thick to see anything..." Said Rossbach while moving the periscope, looking into a blank white field of vision. Despite the previous shockwaves, the surface of the sea is strangely calm.

The source of the shockwave must also be near the surface of the sea. Just when Rossbach thought that, a black shadow loomed out from deep within the dense fog.

No way... No way... No way, Rossbach keeps thinking in astonishment.

“Is that... an island?”

Anxiety overtook the submarine. For everyone knew that there was no island in here. But a kilometer ahead, Rossbach saw a rocky island, black and wet and shiny. Surrounded by sheer cliffs, the island presented a strange sight of sword-like rocky mountains overlapping each other, the surface of the rocks covered with dense white shellfish - including the mountaintops!

It looks as if it had been at the bottom of the sea just recently.

Rossbach's mouth, which had been staring at the island even more, squeezed out a trembling voice.

"Oh, God..."

His gaze caught a square block of rock hidden among the boulders. Though half-collapsed and half-crushed, the square rock is clearly an artificial construction. Even Rossbach, who knew nothing about archaeology, could sense something strange about the architectural style. The ruins before him did not resemble any known civilization and seemed more evil than anything else.

“Let me see, skipper.”

When Rossbach handed over the periscope, the guest of honor gave a satisfied, cold smile, then exhale deep, loud breaths with both shoulders.

"Captain, prepare to land." said the guest of honor, crossing his arms on his chest. “Rejoice! The Promised Land is upon us!"

Rossbach listened in amazement to the words of his guest of honor, thinking - "was it not you who tried to exterminate the Jewish people who were supposed to go to the Promised Land? where is this Promised Land you speak of? Who is the God who promised you?"

Rossbach fought back a terrible chill and looked at the ship's clock.

What a bad joke. June 6, 6:00 a.m.

New Testament. The number of the beast as described in Revelation, chapter 13.

Rossbach thought back to his young daughters who learned it in Sunday school. He wondered if those children were safe and sound. Whether he would see his daughter again.
With anxiety and fear, the U588 began to surface in a sea of thick fog.

【Chapter 1】

“No one saw you, did they?”
When asked, the man who entered the room steadfastly took a stance.
"I took a cab and the monorail as usual. There was no indication that I was followed."
"Can never be too sure. You'll have to take more than one route to get here."
Five white people were relaxing in an inconspicuous house out in the backstreets - all plainly dressed, but with sharp eyes and sturdy physiques.
The man who seemed to be the ringleader of the group cautiously opened the curtains of the window slightly.
"Our previous enemies are nothing more than a distraction."
Outside the window, one could see the city lights and an uniquely shaped opera house.
Sydney was celebrating a hot new year of 2000 - the sea breeze blew pleasantly, but the headman would not open the window.
"Now that we are all here, I will pass on the orders from headquarters."
The headman laid the papers out on the table.
A sigh of relief escaped from the rest of the men.
"Thank goodness. Can we finally leave Australia?"
"The heat is unbearable for us, Germans, you know."
The man holding up an automatic rifle smiled, letting the scars on his face do the talking.
"So, where's our next assignment?"
"The location is Tokyo... but we're not going to kidnap someone Japanese. The target is a white person, just like us."
Mixed in with the maps and airline tickets, a dozen or so photographs were among the papers presented. They are all concealed shots of the same person. Looking at them, the man with the rifle let out a jolly whistle.
"Oh, damn..."
Just as he said that, there was a light knock on the door. As if on cue, three knocks, twice.
" Fritz, who is it?"
The name called out was the watchman who was supposed to be outside the door, but the moment the door lock clicked open, countless bullets smashed through the door, and a man with gunshot wounds all over his body fell right back through the door with a spray of blood - at the same time, the window glass shattered and more shots struck the men inside. The man with the automatic rifle was unable to react and was shot through the brain.
In just a few seconds, every German in the room turned into a bloody mess.
"Ascalon 3, success."
"Ascalon 8, success."

A man in black combat uniform, no, eight of them showed up inside without making a sound of footsteps. The movements to confirm death and examine personal belongings of the Germans were frighteningly agile. They are accustomed to murder - all the operatives wielded MP7SD9 short machine guns with silencers.

The helmets they wore, which completely covered their face, were also equipped with an automatic sighting device.

"Ascalon Leader to all NCO's. All targets confirmed killed. No damage. We will now seize the relevant documents. Continue to seal off the area."

The man, who seems to be the commander, spoke to the microphone on his helmet, then one of his subordinates nodded as he gathered up his papers.

"We got everything. They've got airline tickets to Tokyo, and now they were going to kidnap someone in Japan. This is the third one they've done this year. There's no end to what they're planning."

As the commander pushed away a table splattered with blood, several photographs slipped to the floor. The commander picked one up, stained with fresh blood, and looked at it.

"This girl...!"

The voice was of disbelief, but no matter how many pictures the commander flipped through, they were all of the same person. When the commander checked the contents of the documents, he exhibited an unusual nervousness.

"How did they realize you were alive... after hiding your whereabouts for 12 years... Why..."

Only the deputy reacts to the commander's words:

"Is this girl someone you know?.."

"Oh... I thought they had forgotten about it, too..."

But how did this happen? The commander wondered, and that's when it happened - the commander was called by his original name. It was a scream.

"Major Hadley!" shouted one of the people examining the bodies.

Someone's fingernails ripped into the man's arm. It was the claw of the ringleader, who had just been shot.

"Don't... get in the way of... I'm not going to let you get in our way..."

The ringleader, who rose up, glared at Major Hadley, his left eye dangling from the orbit by nerve fibers. Fresh blood flowed from his abdomen, and pink organs were hanging from the wound. And yet, the ringleader is still standing up. He is smiling. He has willpower.

Without regard to more screams, the ringleader ripped the arm off the black soldier's body and lunged at Major Hadley, displaying inhuman strength and speed.

"We're going to the Promised Land!"

But there was not a trace of fear on Major Hadley's face - he pulled from his waist a Belgian-made 5.7mm automatic pistol, FN 57.

"There is no Promised Land for the likes of you."

The guns on both sides roared at the same time, aimed at the ringleader neck - an accurate shot pierces through the brain of the leader. With that, the brain plasma-spattered ringleader slammed against the wall and collapsed.

"So, the Immortals still hold command..."
For some reason, white steam begins to exhume from the head of the ringleader's corpse.
Looking down at the no-longer-moving ringleader, the Major almost felt sorry.
"The enemy of our agency are not human beings. Keep that in mind."
The subordinate whose arm was ripped off is hurriedly carried away by the others.
The Major's mouth was closed as he looked away bitterly from the scene.
"Contact Tokyo. This is not the time to give up on them."
"Are you going to Japan? But I'm pretty sure this girl has a..."
When the second-in-command tried to warn him, Major Hadley just nodded.
'Oh, she does have the most dependable bodyguard on the planet. But..."
Wanting to make sure of something, the major rolled the corpse of the ringleader on his toes. The badge rolls out of the leader's pocket with a bounce, and the Major stomped on it. The shape of the badge was, indeed, a swastika.

In the early morning, Ueno Park was covered with a humid June-like atmosphere. At 6 a.m. on a Friday morning, there is still not a soul around. Wait, no, just one guy in this heat, wearing a black tracksuit - he even had a hood over his head and was barefoot despite being in a grove of trees.
The face is undecipherable. Tall. Well-proportioned body. He lifted his arms with ease and twisted them in a strange way, turning his wrists as if kneading something, dropping his hips, and twisting the upper body as well. Every observer was stunned by these graceful movements.
"There's no mistaking, it's the guy from last time."
"Can't make out the face, but the movements are the same. I think it's Tai Chi."
The five or six observers all have strong bodies. The back of their shirts, wrapping around their fearless bodies all read Gladiators - but behind them was a giant of a man who looked not only fearless, but also ferocious.
"Tai chi is a great martial art."
He is 195 centimeters tall. Hanging eyes and a brutal smile. The huge man, who looked like a large refrigerator, pushed away the men around him. He said, "Tai chi has enough power to kill people, too. You're in a lot of pain because you picked it."
"Well, maybe we're the ones at fault..." - said one man in a frightened voice - "I'm pretty sure I got drunk and started messing around with that guy. But..."
"But I don't think we're going to slam anything into the Shinobazu Pond - is that what you want to say?" The huge man with a short-cropped head of hair smiled wryly.
The next moment, he pulled man near him by the collar and lifted him into the air.
"No excuses. You may be a new member, but you're still a pro, right?"
"P-Put me down!"
"And you're wearing the Gladiators insignia,' the big man added - "Good thing it's early in the morning, but try to get his attention or else the face of our organization will be destroyed."
"I'm sorry, Kodera-san!"

The giant man, who, apparently, was Kodera-san, licked his tongue.
When Kodera turned to look, the tracksuit guy was still repeating his graceful motions. The observers gasped as they heard the bones creak and stir.
"We really should just leave..."
"You guys are the ones to blame. You're the ones who told me how strong that guy is."
Rotate the arms. Bend over. Each movement of Kodera makes the wind tremble. Fixing his eyes on the guy in black, the giant grinned.
"He's the guy who threw 20 of you guys without lifting a finger. I'm tempted to eat him."
"If you're too rough with him, that's exactly what HE'll do..."
"Idiot, that's why I'm here, an ace in the hole. We wouldn't be here if you either saw his face or apologized to him, anyway."
In the grove, a the jet-black clad man was still formulating something. Silently, he thrusts out his palm and gently presses it against the large tree. And then stillness.
Kodera walked up to the movement that seemed like a dance.
"Hey, you."
But the jet-black figure does not even turn around, let alone answer - he just stood there as if he was having a conversation with the big tree.
"I'm talking to y-" Kodera extended his arm as he said this, but his hand, for some reason, was gripping empty air instead of the guy's shoulder. Before Kodera knew it, the jet-black man has shifted his body slightly and was now outside of the giant's reach. When did it even happen? It's absurd. And at this close of a range...
Kodera didn't see any movement at all.
The youngsters who rushed in later after Kodera also had a shocked look on their faces.
"What do you want?" - the voice under the hood was still that of a boy - "I'm in the middle of training."
What exactly could one be training by facing a large tree? With a sense of incomprehension, Kodera came forward.
"You remember the Gladiators, dontcha, young man?" Kodera identified his allegiance.
The boy gave a small nod in response to the giant's question.
Ultimate Fighting Arts is the most popular martial arts tournament in the world. It's a grueling combat sport competition where anything goes, except biting, attacking the marbles, and eye gouging. Gladiators is one of the leading major organizations with a myriad of players. The group has had a lot of exposure in the media, and everyone knows that they're well versed in striking and joint techniques.
But the boy was unphased. Kodera did not like that.
"I hear you beat them out of the ring."
"I was just trying to sober you guys up."
"I see - but don't get me wrong, those guys were rookies who can't even compete in the tournament." Kodera then clenched his fists "I don't want people to underestimate the power of our gang. That's why I'm here to show you..!"
"You don't have to."
"I have to. I don't want to be disgraced when people tell me that our organization is weak." Kodera closed the gap even further. "I'm just trying to say - don't throw our rookies under the bus and get all nice and fuzzy."

But the boy showed no sign of timidity. He exhaled, and then he uttered something completely unexpected - "I don't like losing game fights."

"..Really now?" Kodera became arrogant at the boy's casual remark. The flesh of his shoulders shuddered, making him look like a statue of a Nio. Kodera, furious, stormed over to the boy "This ain't a game... this is serious business", his voice filled with the pride of a fighter. His martial art is the strongest. His pride makes him ignore the boy's words.

"It's a serious fight, we ain't playing around!"

"Don't say you're sorry after this" the boy mumbled, sounding annoyed "I ain't backing down now."

Kodera began to turn his thick neck in front of the fearless boy, muscles jostling and joints making creaking sounds. Emotions had gone beyond anger to murder.

"No gawkers. Besides, I'm wearing a Gladiators sign. Others'll think I was practicing."

Kodera slowly closes the gap between the two. A hot, murderous atmosphere. In the past, some people would have been cowed by that alone. When the boy still did not change his attitude, the giant man moved even closer "My name is Soji Kodera."

For the giant, it was his last chance to surrender. The scene of him straddling his opponent's body until he becomes a bloody mess has been broadcast on television many times. He thought that if the boy heard his name, he'd cry and beg for forgiveness.

But the boy sounded serious and only tilted his head "Never heard of him. Is he strong?"

As those words were spoken, heat surged from Kodera's body. No fighter will go easy on a fighter after being told to do so

"Shouldn't have said that, now I'm gonna...!" Kodera was ready to crush the boy for real, not just to the extent of "eating" him. He'll take the boy's arm and snap it in an instant. That was the plan, at least...

"When did you...!"

It was Kodera who let out that scream. Moreover, with the boy in front of him, he is unable to make the slightest move. The boy quietly announced to the stunned men:

"Move even a little bit..." he looks up at Kodera, who is fainting in agony, and says coldly "And I'll break it."

If you look at it, you'd notice the boy's toe stepping on Kodera's right foot.

The sound of a struggle. An unbelievable force is holding back the giant's rush. I am not talking about breaking a toe. I'm talking about breaking the tarsus. Moreover, the boy's leg is causing Kodera so much pain that he cannot move.

Do you know the kryptonite of the human body, which cannot be overcome by training?

"...Son of a bitch!"

But Kodera's body is no ordinary one. Having experienced countless pains, he overcame the intense pain. The boy should not be able to move now. Kodera saw that and was about to strike his fist...

"C'mon, let's not do this. I hate this kind of hassle" again, the boy is outside the unleashed fist, and he caught Kodera's fist without any difficulty. So close that he could breathe on it.

“You sure ain't no amateur... What the hell is this...!" the boy seems to have put real energy into his legs. Kodera could no longer move an inch. Furthermore, the fist that was caught was also trembling in pain. The boy is clenching Kodera's fist as if he's holding a rock. The young people watching were unsure if they should join in to help.

Then, from somewhere, a dry voice and applause interrupted.

"...I see, I see..."

A small man revealed himself, with a face full of stubble and wearing a worn kimono. Compared to Kodera, who has a large physique, he does not appear to have a good appearance - but the moment he appeared, the backs of the youngsters were soundly stretched. On the contrary, even Kodera swallowed his breath.

"...Oh, h-hey dad!"

"Nicely done, Soji. No one can throw a punch while being stepped on!"

The man smiled gently at the giant who could not move.

"You're a part of the next-generation of aces I myself trained. The Gladiators will be safe for a while."

"But this guy is..!"

"There are innumerable points in the body used in acupuncture, Oriental medicine and as killing points in jujutsu..."

The man then turned his gaze to the jet-black boy, observing every part of his body as if looking at something he was going to buy.

"That's exactly a you're stomping on. It's certainly hard to believe... I've never seen someone do this before. I never thought that a man could actually hold that killing point at the distance you just did."

Instantly, the boy relaxed his legs. Kodera crumbled to the ground.

The man who just appeared walked up to the boy and offered his business card.

"I'm their coach" - hearing Kodera's moaning, Suenaga looked at the boy with a laborious gaze, "I am sorry for the trouble I caused you. My apologies as well."

But the boy had no intention of accepting the card - Kodera almost jerked up again at the irreverence of this attitude.

“Oh, Dad, he's the one who roughed us up at...”

"Soji, it's alright..."

That's enough. When Suenaga withdrew his business card, the giant man was also silenced.

"I'll be back later with a formal apology from the group. Mister..?"

"No thanks."

"..."

"Can I go now?"

"I'd like to talk to you for a minute more, if that's possible" the coach's voice began to show a different emotion than apology, though his apology was low-pitched, meanwhile his gaze probed the boy "What the hell is that martial art of yours, anyway?"

"..."

"No need to hide it. I have a few tricks of my own - but at that close of a range, I could never dodge even a single blow, much less two" Suenaga continued speaking, now somewhat happily.

"There are many people who know the theory of killing points. But only masters can put it into practice without pain to themselves. If you train that hard... I'm sure it would work at our place too."

Kodera and his comrades were taken aback by the unexpected words. Suenaga's smile was becoming more and more cunning. Was he also a man trained in some martial art? There was no gap in his inviting gaze.

"If my eyes are not mistaken, we have a future world champion right in front of us."

Both Kodera and the younger generation had already forgotten how to even breathe. Suenaga saw great qualities in a man he had seen for only a few minutes.

And everyone knows Suenaga's eye for detail. He is a man who can recognize strength.

The boy, however, only glanced at his wristwatch, then backed away curtly.

"A minute has passed. Well, I'm off."

This time Suenaga was taken aback by the boy running away.

"So... Hey - wait, you!"

But the boy's feet do not stop. Not even a trace of regret. That's when the coach tried to rush to catch up.

"Who the hell do you think you are!?" suddenly, Kodera howled. Unexpectedly, the boy stopped walking. Kodera's face was red with resentment.

"You are not an old martial artist and you don't want to use your power to make money. You're just trying to show off... And you're going to make us look like a bunch of fools!"

"..."

"There's no shame in it. I train, I get stronger, I make money. What's wrong with that?!"

The boy slowly turned around in response to Kodera's question.

At that moment, a chill ran down Kodera's and the youngsters' spines.

The boy's eyes peeking through the hood shone like sharp blades.

All the Gladiators reflexively backed away the boy pulled up the hood covering his head.

"I want money, too."

He rolls up the sleeves of his tracksuit. Instantly, the smell of a deadly beast fills the air. The bare arms were like bundles of muscles with countless scars on the skin. Cuts, burns, bruises and small circular scratches...

"Hey, where on earth did you... Those wounds..."

The boy removed the heavy weights on his arms in front of Kodera's trembling eyes. Probably five kilos in each arm. Kodera didn't know it was even possible to move that much. And the same weight on his ankle exposed everything, the boy murmured "...I have more important things to do."

Only Coach Suenaga could bring a big smile to his face when he said:

"...You exceed my expectations, more than I could have ever imagined."

But the boy runs off without looking back.

At the same time, the Gladiators all noticed something and looked behind them. The trunk, where the boy had pressed his palm against earlier, trembles faintly. The

next moment, a large tree emitted a sound like a tidal wave. Every single green leaf on every branch fell to the ground. Kodera is speechless at the sight of the mountain of leaves. Only one person, Suenaga, smiled at the boy's back.
Another one.

In Tokyo in the year 2000 A.D., June had already arrived.
But the humid rainy season sky is nowhere to be found, just a series of hot and humid summer days.
Global warming, which began at the end of the 20th century, has also transformed Japan's four seasons.
Summer is gradually lengthening and the harshness of winter is easing. The climate is close to subtropical.
While the streets of Tokyo have changed, the old houses of the old downtown area are still standing.
The area called Nezu, close to Ueno Park, also retained its old Tokyo appearance.

The jet-black boy ran slowly into that Nezu alley, entering an old but magnificent mansion. The house, no wonder it is said to be in its first hundred years, has a nameplate that reads "Hououji. The garden, lined with lanterns, was covered by a bamboo grove, and a boarded-up detached house was also visible.
"Damn... I'm late by half an hour..." peering at his watch, the boy takes off his tracksuit.
Short wavy hair, golden and with streaks of jet black. It is not dyed, but full of natural beauty. His fearless profile exudes an air of dignity beyond his young years. His eyes, a mixture of sharpness and coolness, have a certain solemnity to them.
His gaze suddenly flashed sharply.
"No way..!"
The bridge of his nose moves. The boy's sense of smell has caught something.
The boy had already jumped over three garden stones.
In a blink of an eye, he takes off his shoes and runs into the main house. And then...
He smiles.
“Lorraine... What are you doing..?"
"Oh, welcome back!"
A beaming smile turned with the sound of a gentle voice, her eyes a clear blue cobalt blue. The luminous glow of her blonde hair reaches all the way to her back.
The girl, wearing an apron over her high school summer uniform, looked up at the boy curiously.
"You were very late this morning. If you don't hurry up, you'll be late for school!"
A girl by the name of Lorraine is cutting a sandwich on the table.
She speaks fluent Japanese, but she's a foreigner who looks out of place in this mansion.
The boy looked at the sandwiches packed in his lunch box and pulled a smile.
"Oh, uh... Didn't I say that I'll make my lunch myself?"
"I waited for you to come home this morning but you didn't, so I went all out and made enough for both of us. Would you taste it for me?"
“Oh, of course... it looks as good as ever.”

With a voice that became awfully sweet, the boy took a bite of the sandwich offered to him. Instantly, a crisp sound echoed in the mouth. What followed was an indescribable taste. Not in a good way. Still, the boy's smile did not falter.

"It's... definitely special. So good that it makes me dizzy! What's in it?"

"It's red bean paste and... pickled radish! Yeah. Oh, and I put mayonnaise in it!"

Finally, the boy's body wobbled. The sandwich may have looked perfect, but his taste buds and stomach resisted it fiercely.

But Lorraine smiles and brings her face close to the boy's.

"I'm sure it's delicious - all your favorite things in it! I'm so proud of it," she said, moving her face closer to him.

"Well, I must say, Lorraine, I'm impressed. You're a genius at cooking."

" Really? Wow, that's great!" the girl with the apron hugged the boy tightly with her thin arms, then, like a puppy, she rubs her nose against the boy's chest. With a sweet fragrance wafting from her hair, Lorraine smiled at the boy. I can't tell you the truth about this smile. But...

"If that's the case, have another one! Here, let me feed you."

With an angelic smile, Lorraine stuffed a second attack into the boy's mouth.

The boy faints in agony, not only his sense of taste but even his thoughts are destroyed and his stomach twists. That's when Lorraine finally noticed a slight modulation in the boy.

“What's wrong, did it not taste good?” This time, abruptly, Lorraine's eyes began to crowd with anxiety.

Blue eyes shine like the surface of the water and ripples spread out.
The boy hurriedly shoved the sandwich down his throat.
"No... Of course not! I-I could eat more!"
"But you look kind of pale. Hey, if it doesn't taste good, just be honest..."
"Trust me!“ he said, ”I'd never lie to you, Lorraine."
Then the blonde girl smiled back.
"I'm so glad! Dai-chan, you always tell me I don't have to make lunch..."
Dai-chan. Only girls referred to him by that.
Daiga Honnouji. He's been living like this for more than 10 years now.
The nickname Dai-chan grows more embarrassing as he grew older, but it's hard to resist.
For Lorraine, he'll always be just a little boy...
"Hey, Dai-chan, please leave this sandwich for Grandpa."
Standing beside Lorraine, who's talking to him calmly, the boy is getting dressed in his high school uniform.
"Of course, Lorraine. Gramps is up already, isn't he?"
Noticing that the clock struck 7:30, the boy took Lorraine's arm and went out into the yard. Pulling Lorraine along with him, the boy shouted to the boarded-up apartments.
"Grandpa, we're off! There's sandwiches left in the kitchen!"
“Oh, be careful!” though Daiga can't see him, his old man's voice still gives him an answer.
"Lorraine's sandwiches are all yours! She said she'd leave some for you" the boy was tongue-tied in his cunning lines.
"You're gonna outlive me anyway... If you're not busy, cook a meal once in a while!"
"Oh, my God, Dai-chan, so you ARE unhappy with my breakfast after all?"
"No, no, of course not... Anyway, let's go. Come on!"
With their footsteps, Lorraine's dainty voice fades into the distance.

A cool breeze ruffled the quiet house, and the bamboo grove rustled. The old dojo is perched amidst the greenery.
The short-cropped gray head and deep breathing certainly belong to an old man in his eighties, but even with his back turned away in his kimono, his shoulders are heaving like a mass, his meaty body full of vigor and fists clenched and deformed.
"He'll always be a kid, that one."
As he sipped his sake, the old man looked up at the blue sky of early summer.
"You can't stay a kid forever, though."
As he closes his eyes to sleep, the old man exhales a breath that reeks of alcohol. Numerous scars run across the old man's rocky face. It looks as if he has been stitched up, but his sleeping face is peaceful. However...
"Go home. I don't know who you are" suddenly the old man called out into the silence.
"I'm just a retired old man. I don't want any trouble."
There was not a soul in the area. No sign of life could be felt. But the old man opens only his right eye and stares through it at the depths of the bamboo grove.

Then, without a footstep, a tall, slender woman appeared - she wears no accessories of any kind and is dressed in a tasteless dark suit, which she wore despite the heat, but even it couldn't hide her elegant limbs. The line from her ample bosom to her nipped-in waist, coupled with her long legs, is ideal. Her wavy black hair was flowing majestically, and intelligence shone in her eyes.

“...Hououji Muyori, correct?”

The woman turned to the edge of the room, kept her smile, and the old man... was, indeed, Hououji Muyori.

“My name is...”

"No need to say your name. Go home." Muyori kept his eyes fixed on the table, and this time he started picking up the pickled radish on his plate with chopsticks.

"I'm an old man in my prime, and I don't ain't got nothing to say to a woman who's got a lot of trouble on her hands."

"Trouble? No, I'm not a troublemaker..."

"Well, things have become very dangerous in this world, haven't they? How can you not be so suspicious when you have something in your pocket?"

Immediately, the woman's spine went into a tailspin. How can someone discern that with one's eyes closed?

Then the old bastard twisted his face in a funny way.

"Bamboo leaves on the ground always make a sound when you step on them. Your footsteps did. But you approached me without making a single footstep. That's dangerous."

And the woman finally realized it.

The old man was still lying down, but he had already staked out a pause. Moreover, it is not the hot, passionate pause that is characteristic of martial artists. It is just popping and randomly deploying silent wards. Unless one has been in a real battle, one would not easily notice this.

Too cunning. The woman understood the old man's competence just by the pause.

"...Are you inviting me to a duel?" Suddenly, the woman's voice was filled with coldness.

The cover was blown. Meanwhile, the old man was still eating the pickled radish.

“Ha-a...!” Exhaling a short breath, the woman plunged her right hand into her chest.

The next moment, it looked like, the black muzzle of a Beretta M92 was thrust against the forehead of the old fool, aiming with unparalleled accuracy. The unannounced, mechanical, robot-like strike instantly took the old man's place. That is...

"Knew it. I'm so pathetic..." exhaling a sigh, Muyo pitied himself "

"I really am past my prime, huh."

The woman was startled and shook her pistol in a blur. The chopsticks that held Beretta down were the chopsticks that had held the pickled radish between them earlier.

Despite being so close, the woman did not even see the movement. Muyori used only chopsticks to seal the slide of the pistol. The trigger did not move even slightly.

"If you're "past your prime", just... what kind of stunts were you pulling off when you were young?" Blood rushed to the woman's face as Muyori finally opened his eyes.

"Dunno, been a long time since then. I've forgotten already."

Realizing her helplessness, Muyori let go of his chopsticks as the woman relaxed her hold on Beretta. The woman, with her gun tucked into her chest, presents her ID card as if in contemplation.

"My name is Reiko Sakomizu. I am a lieutenant in the Metropolitan Police Department's International Crimes Division."

"Oh, my cherry blossom, you have a lot of spunk despite being so young!"

"Don't flatter. You just played with me."

Reiko's moves are also those of someone who knows martial arts. She also has the intelligence to hide her true nature. She's not just a competent investigator - her eyes are sharp enough to show there's more to her.

The old man, perhaps sensing Reiko's true character, gave a light smile.

"The police these days just pull 'em guns out of the blue. Terrifying, if you ask me."

"You're the one who invited me to the duel. What a terrible, carefree person you are."

"I knew what I was getting into. You're the terrible one here!"

Reiko would've chewed his guts out. The old fool, meanwhile, sat cross-legged and as if inviting Reiko to join him.

"Well, sit down. I'll serve you a drink right away."

"You gotta be kidding me! I'm on duty. I don't drink even when I'm NOT on duty, anyway."

Muyori just laughs off Reiko's words with whataboutery.

Still, Reiko, sitting on the porch, took up residence with the old man, who did not seem like an ordinary person.

"I am here to discuss something important. It's about your grandson... Hououji Daiga."

At the mention of that name, old man Muyori tilted his head.

"If you're looking for the Great Fang, he's in high school. Just left, too - maybe you can catch up to him."

"I want to make sure about something first. About his growth."

"Hmm. And here I thought he was gonna get dragged into some mess again."

"What do you mean? He hasn't committed any crimes... has he?"

But the old man does not answer the question.

Muyori just chewed the pickled radish and brought a mouthful of sake to his mouth.

"He's growing up well," he said. "His height is about 185... and he's still growing."

"That's not what I meant."

"So then, you're asking me if he has grown as a man. Then I have some advice for you..."

Muyori suddenly looked at Reiko with a wild-eyed gaze and pointed at Reiko's chest with his chopsticks.

"My grandson is old enough to be a little saccharine in a different way. If he saw you dressed like that, he'd attack you on the spot."

At being told that, Reiko looked down at her white blouse the buttons have been ripped off from top to bottom without her even noticing. The room was open, and the white underwear encasing her ample breasts was fully visible.

“When the hell did that happen!?”

Screaming, Reiko hid it with her jacket and by now found herself at the feet of Muyori.

The buttons were neatly arranged on the plate with the pickled radish. Did he tore them off before hoisting the Beretta?

Finally, Reiko realized the unfathomable power of the giggling old man.

"Oh, you..!"

"Told you, Reiko. He ain't no one-trick pony..."
Reiko was interrupted by a new male voice. Afterwards, he steps noiselessly on the bamboo leaves and quietly walks over to the porch. Already realizing his presence as well, Muyori dried his drink in a boring manner.
"Ah, and I wanted to play with her a little bit longer..."
"Now that I am here in Japan, you know exactly what I'm here for."
The man took a bow, ignoring Muyori's words.
“Long time no see, Mr. Muyori... Master Burai... Or should I say... Master Mutsuki.”
Again, the wind whistled.

The boy knew there was a bright red darkness.
There is no escape. Even if you close your eyes, somehow you can still see it.
In a world that seemed to be sprinkled with fresh blood all over, the boy ran and ran.
But no matter how much he runs, it's as if he hasn't moved an inch.
And the voice calling out to him from his back never goes away.
"Great Fang... Great Fang..."
It is a gentle woman's voice.
But the boy never once turned his head to the voice.
For some reason, it seemed like a horrible voice.
Even when he covered his ears, the name stuck in the back of my eardrums.
"Great Fang... Great Fang..."
As usual, he just curled up his body and became still.
Let your fear roam. Forgive yourself.
But today, the voices were closer than usual.
"Daiga-kun... Daiga-kun, of the phoenix temple ....."
"D... Depression..."
“Hey, Big Fang, wake up!”
"Aaahhh!"

The moment a hand was placed on his shoulder, Hououji Daiga awoke from his nightmare. Then he looked around. The familiar classroom and classmates.
Daiga exhaled loudly and ruffled his golden and black tresses.
"...Hey teach, you need something?"
"What the hell, Daiga?! You slept in my class again!"
The English teacher, still in her mid-twenties, tapped Da Fang's shoulder with a textbook.
"You stand out so much, I can easily recognize you even when you're asleep."
The tallest student sitting at the back of the classroom would, indeed, be more visible than the rest. Furthermore, the atmosphere produced by his whole body is unusual. Reminds one of a sharp blade.
No classmate has ever sneered at Da Fang because of his unfathomable atmosphere.
But despite his bad attitude, the homeroom teacher does not remember any act of rebellion from the Big Fang.
That's why the teacher tapped him on the shoulder again, lovingly.

"You don't attend any of the school events, and you're partly homeschooled, too, so at least listen to your classes."
"Aa-ah... Sure, I will."
As Daiga gives a muffled reply, the bell rings.
Friday. As the last class came to an end, Da Fang wiped away a cold sweat.
It's the kind of sweat you don't get from running on a hot day, no matter how much you run.
Once every 10 days. In the worst case, a nightmare once every three days.
And that's as far back as Daiga can remember. He's had them forever.
Like this morning, Daiga feels no fear when surrounded by guys who know what they're doing. But this nightmare is different. He can never get used to it.
"Damn... What's up with these dreams..."
As his classmates were getting ready to leave, Daiga looked out the window for a change.
As the name suggests, Jingu Gakuen High School, the private high school that he attended, is located in the heart of the city, bordering the Jingu Gaien Garden.
This neighborhood, bordered by Shinjuku, Shibuya, and Minato wards, had many green areas and sports facilities. Yet, it is also close to downtown. Jingu Gakuen is truly located in the center of Tokyo. It has a nursery school through college, and Da Fang has attended it from elementary school to high school.
It was not an exceptionally advanced school. Rather, it focused on sports and arts education. Daiga is a second-year regular course student, but Jingu Gakuen is known for its many other courses and is very popular.
One classmate called out to Da Fang, who was looking down on that schoolyard.
"By the way, Daiga, have you thought about joining the soccer team..?"
"Wait a minute, didn't I say no already?"
The classmates blatantly ignored the actual fang that adorned Daiga and was the source of the nickname.
"No, you ARE going to join our soccer team, AND you're going to lead us to the national championship. Oh, and more importantly, I want you to win the national championship and put our faces on TV!"
"You just want to use me. What kind of soccer team relies on just one guy, anyway..."
"I'm inviting you to join us! The whole club is holding hands in prayer, and we even stomped a hundred times to get you in!"
“If you guys wanted to win you shoulda been kicking balls instead of holding hands."
The soccer team member shook his head at Daiga with his head in his hands.
"It's so weird that you're in the regular course in the first place! Why not join the sports course?"
The question was one that was held by the whole school not just this particular classmate.
Da Fang can run 100 meters in 9 seconds and swim the freestyle in less than 50 seconds.
No one, not even the students in the sports course, could match him.
But what is more mysterious is that Da Fang is not serious about any of this, too! He's setting world records with the most casual, devil-may-care look on his face.
Naturally, the teachers encouraged him to transfer to the sports department, and there are countless scouting offers. However, Daiga continued to refuse professional sports,

no matter how much money was offered to him. It's obvious from his physique that he works out, so why?

"I don't like sports" voicing the usual reason, Da Fang did some usual stretching.

Of course, Daiga had his own reason for physical training. He didn't train just to get stronger, either. However, he mentioned the reason only once. That reason was...

"Hey, Big Fang!"

Suddenly called out, Daiga turned his attention to a tree-lined avenue in the outer gardens of the Jingu Shrine. On the roadside, girls in pale pink uniforms can be seen - students in the nursing course of Jingu Gakuen High School. These girls are studying to become nurses through a five-year integrated education program.

Among them, there was only one girl with long blonde hair. There she is. Even though she is far away, she still shines like the sun. Her clear cobalt blue eyes had noticed Daiga looking out from the window.

“Dai-chan, are you done with classes already?” Daiga's smile became even more dazzling, and he waved his right hand in a small gesture. Even with just that cursory response, Lorraine waves back with all her might.

When Lorraine eventually left for another school building, the soccer team member was still there beside Daiga.

"Daiga, I'm done talking about joining the soccer team. Instead, I have an announcement!"

"Eh?"

"I'm appointing Lorraine as the exclusive cheerleader for our soccer team!"

As soon as he said this, the soccer team member pulled out a piece of drawing paper out of nowhere. "Look at this! I stayed up all night thinking of Lorraine's uniform!"

"If you have time to stay awake and think about then, then you got time to play ball- What's with the skirt?! It's too short!"

"Don't be so old-fashioned, Daiga! The shortness is the aspect that brings out the best in her! By the way, I call this outfit "refreshing sexiness"!

Da Fang stood up from his seat in disgust.

"Lorraine would never wear something like that. It's stupid."

"I know, I know. But if you were the one to suggest to her to wear that..."

"Screw you. I can't have Lorraine dressed like that."

"You're putting up a hell of a fight. I didn't think it was as bad as they say... You, and Lorraine, just marry alre-..."

Before he could finish, Da Fang gave the soccer boy a brainwhacker with his fist.

"Me and Lorraine ain't like that."

"B-But she's always been all over you!

"That's because we live together. We go to separate schools!"

"Then hit me harder, Great Fang! Lorraine will nurse me afterwards, ha-ha!"

Letting out a sigh, Daiga stuffed his stuff into the backpack.

"I just live with her." his hands are rougher than usual as he prepares to leave. The soccer team member also backed away when they noticed Da Fang's irritation.

"Oh, I guess you really did get angry. If you're offended, I can..."

"Don't sweat it. Just know - that's all there is to it."

Daiga put his oversized lunch box into the backpack too.
Not a single one of the special sandwiches was left. Rubbing his aching stomach, Daika left the classroom.

"Here you go, Lorraine."
An active-looking girl runs down a tree-lined street in Jingu Gaien, in both hands - ice cream bought from a wagon wheel sale. She offered one on a cone to Lorraine, who was waiting on the bench.
"Thank you, Miki. But please, don't run when holding something - it's dangerous!"
"I'm not clumsy like you, I don't fall down. But are you sure that's the one you wanted?"
"Yup. Kimchi and durian mixed ice cream. Always wanted to try it."
Lorraine's smile sent a shiver down Ogawa Miki's spine.
"You always pick the most incredible combos. God, the smell!"
"But it's delicious. Next week I'll make a mix of natto beans and chocolate. Mmmmmm."
"I sure as hell DON'T look forward to your bizarre combinations every week!"
They're both 17 years old and both are freshmen nursing classmates at Jingu Gakuen High School, though Miki looks like Lorraine's big sister due to being taller.
Miki is the "older sister" archetype. Her boyish hairstyle and interesting eyes are both quite distinguishing, too. The two contrasting best friends were enjoying their after-school time on a bench in the shade of a tree.
"I'm not going to be able to do the training tomorrow," Miki said "Even though it's Saturday."
"Oh, really? Personally, I'm looking forward to it."
Miki frowned at Lorraine, who smiled at her.
"If you're in nursing at another school, the practical training starts in your sophomore year. You don't go to hospitals or nursing homes - oh, and when I say “practical training,” I don't just mean going along with the seniors and helping them."
"I guess so... But tomorrow is nursery school practice, right? I'm not good with kids..."
As Miki's shoulders slumped, Lorraine smiled again.
"I like children. They were very friendly to me during my last internship."
"You're just a teen with the mentality of a child, and your gramps is even more childish!"
Lorraine's lips pouted when she was told that.
"At least Dai-chan ain't a kid."
"Yes he is! More like a baby, even. The other day he got into a fight with a student from another school..."
Lorraine sweltered even more when Miki licked a bite of ice cream.
"The only reason he even got into the fight was because someone was pestering me..."
"But if they find out I hit you, I'll be expelled. Pf-ft. When did that fight even happen?"
"The person I was talking to was a stranger. If it was someone from a school around here, he would have apologized just for showing his face to Dai-chan... You're really a sweet girl."
Miki looked down at Lorraine, who continued frantically, at an angle.
"What the hell? You're the only person Daiga is nice to, no?"

「キムチとドリアンのミックスアイス。
前から食べたかったの」
味覚破壊者ロレインに大河と美樹は背筋を震わせた。
TATTOO BLADE

Translator's note:

Hi guys! NineSoulsSea here, hope you enjoyed this translation of the 60-page preview of TATTOO BLADE I got from Bookwalker - I sure did! Really feels like a manga/anime but in ranobe form. Super cool stuff! I would love to continue and make a full translation of it but, unfortunately, I don't have any way to buy it on Bookwalker... If you have a Paypal account and some spare 5 dollars, I would be eternally grateful if you could buy the full book and send me screenshots of the rest of the pages, starting with page 60 - who knows, maybe one day I'll adapt it into a full-fledged manga after the translation's done, ha-ha! You can send the screenies to my email: ninesoulssea@gmail.com , or contact me on Discord or Gamejolt.

That's about it. Thank you for reading and have a very TATTOO day.